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S E C R E T ROME 003382

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NOFORN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EU](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [ESDP](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY ON AUGUST 29 ESDP MEETING

REF: A) ROME 3368 B) PARIS 5097

CLASSIFIED BY: A/POL MINISTER COUNSELOR GARY ROBBINS REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)
)

GUIDANCE REQUEST - SEE PARA 5

1. (C) ON JULY 23, MFA CFSP COORDINATOR AND EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT SANDRO DEBERNARDIN BRIEFED POLOFF ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE AUGUST 29 ESDP MEETING DISCUSSED REFTELS. THERE HAD BEEN SOME THOUGHT TO HOLDING THE MEETING AT MINISTERS' LEVEL, AND THAT IS STILL A POSSIBILITY, BUT IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT POLDIRS FROM THE 25 EXISTING AND NEW EU MEMBER STATES WILL BE INVITED TO ROME TO DISCUSS EUROPEAN SECURITY ISSUES, INCLUDING PROGRESS ON THE EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY.

2. (C) ACCORDING TO DEBERNARDIN, THE IDEA FOR THE MEETING WAS GENERATED AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE MFA, INCLUDING WITH FM FRATTINI, ON THE BEST METHOD FOR DEALING WITH THE PROPOSALS FROM THE FOUR-NATION APRIL 29 MINI-SUMMIT. THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY WANTS TO "BUILD A BRIDGE" BETWEEN THE FOUR AND THE REST OF THE EU AND "TAKE THE POISON OUT OF" THE BRUSSELS DOCUMENT. THE PRESIDENCY WANTS TO MAKE USE OF THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE MINI-SUMMIT CONCLUSIONS, SUCH AS THE NEED FOR EUROPE TO DEVELOP CAPABILITIES AND A RAPID REACTION FORCE, AND TO ELIMINATE SUPPORT FOR HARMFUL INITIATIVES IN THE DOCUMENT SUCH AS ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE HEADQUARTERS FOR ESDP.

3. (C) THE GOI FULLY AGREES WITH U.S. VIEWS THAT BERLIN-PLUS MUST REMAIN THE FOUNDATION OF THE DISCUSSIONS. ACCORDING TO DEBERNARDIN, THE BRUSSELS-FOUR SUPPORT THE ITALIAN INITIATIVE FOR THE AUGUST MEETING, AND HE IS OPTIMISTIC THAT A WAY CAN BE FOUND TO ADDRESS THEIR CONCERNS WITHOUT ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE HEADQUARTERS. DEBERNARDIN WOULD LIKE THE U.S. TO HELP, QUIETLY, IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS GOAL, AND ASKED FOR OUR POINTS/INPUT AS ITALY PLANS FOR THE MEETING DURING THE AUGUST BREAK.

4. (S/NOFORN) REQUESTING NOT TO BE QUOTED, DEBERNARDIN (STRICTLY PROTECT) OPINED THAT FURTHER PUBLIC CRITICISM BY THE US ON THE MINI-SUMMIT DOCUMENT COULD BE HARMFUL AND JEOPARDIZE THESE ATTEMPTS AT COMPROMISE; IT COULD CAUSE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FOUR TO DIG IN THEIR HEELS ON THE HQ ISSUE. POLOFF POINTED OUT THAT THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE ESDP HQ FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE BERLIN-PLUS AGREEMENTS ON NON-DUPLICATION, AND THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO CRITICIZE SUCH PROPOSALS WHENEVER THEY ARE RAISED.

5. (C) COMMENT AND GUIDANCE REQUEST. THE GOI IS MAKING A GOOD FAITH ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE DEBATE ON ESDP AT 15(25), WHERE IT BELONGS, AND WHERE US VIEWS HOLD GREATER SWAY. POST STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT WE TAKE DEBERNARDIN UP ON HIS OFFER TO CONTRIBUTE (QUIETLY, IN ROME) TO THE PROCESS, WITH IDEAS FOR THE AUGUST 29 MEETING'S CONCLUDING DOCUMENT THAT ADDRESS THE PERCEIVED NEED FOR A SEPARATE ESDP HQ. COUNCIL SECRETARIAT DG ROBERT COOPER ALLUDED TO THE PROBLEM DURING

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THE JULY 18 POLDIRS' TROIKA (REF A) WHEN HE SAID THAT SHAPE DOES NOT YET FUNCTION AS A PLATFORM FOR BERLIN PLUS AND PLANNING FOR EU OPERATIONS.

SEMBLER

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